

Army Shortly Will Open 3 New Training Centers

By John G. Norris

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The Defense Department, by failing to reveal the conversion of the divisions. Others under Congressional fire for permitting a decline in the combat readiness of Army home-based divisions, yesterday disclosed plans to open three new training centers in July to handle 30,000 additional recruits and draftees. The announcement gave no reason for the move. But it was clearly linked to the furor over the conversion of the only four complete Regular Army combat divisions in the United States into training divisions.

Well-informed officials said the expansion had three major aims:

1. To assure that the four divisions which were torn apart to provide replacements for Vietnam and cadres for new units will again be combat-ready later this year when the Army's heavy proportion of green men are whipped into shape. Some fears have been expressed that the four might have to be continued as training divisions.

2. To provide a larger training establishment for a possible further expansion of the Army beyond the 235,000 additional men now authorized, if Vietnam or trouble elsewhere make this necessary.

3. To make it possible to complete the present Army expansion on time.

When plans for expanding the Army and other services were announced last summer, it was stated that the 10 existing basic training centers would be expanded to capacity and that two new ones would be opened. Nothing was said then about also turning the four combat divisions into training units. This was acknowledged only last month.

Since then, Chairman John B. Stennis (D-Miss.) of the Senate Preparedness subcommittee has charged Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara with misleading Congress

by failing to reveal the conversion of the divisions. Others have expressed fears that the Nation's military posture has been weakened by degrading the divisions.

McNamara, however, says that overall military readiness has been preserved by taking this action instead of calling up the Army National Guard and Reserves, as the Army had proposed.

Army staff officers subsequently realized that the expanded training establishment then ordered was insufficient and that further steps were necessary. The expansion now ordered calls for opening new training centers at Ft. Lewis, Wash., Ft. Bragg, N.C. and Ft. Campbell, Ky.

Each center will be able to accept 1,000 new recruits each week and support an average of about 10,000 trainees. The present training establishment can handle an average trainee load of more than 170,000—up 64,000 from last year, Army Secretary Stanley R. Resor said recently.

What evidently delayed the expansion decision was a disagreement over where to find the training cadres for the new centers. A total 13,500 men, mostly military, is required. Finally the decision was made to withdraw 15,000 officers, noncoms and key specialists from Europe and build the forces there back to 225,000 men later this year.

Some of the troops from Germany will man the new training centers, while others will be assigned to new units. For the most part, the new training centers will use existing buildings and facilities.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon said that the Air Force will speed its basic training by cutting the time from six to four weeks and going from a five-day to a six-day week.